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CHORD

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THE PROVINCIAL MUSICAL FESTIVAL

WHEN an Englishman is challenged as to our national cooking, he proudly points to the roast beef of Old England ; if he is asked about the state of drama, he mentions Sir Henry Irving and Mrs. Kendal ; when the happy lawlessness of Central Africa is discussed, he complacently reflects that the House is sitting and that our jails are all full ; should Art be touched on, he knows of Herkomer and the Royal Academy ; and should some daring, ignorant, frog-eating foreigner venture to opine that we have no music, he generally says he knows nothing about it, but his daughter "learns the piano" at the Guildhall School of Music, and he believes our provincial musical festivals are reckoned the best things done in music nowadays. In a Quarterly whose object is the calm, philosophical consideration of all things musical, we have no desire to go idol-smashing, and we are indeed totally indifferent to the many and variegated articles of the average Englishman's political, financial, moral, religious and artistic creed. If he thinks Herkomer a great artist and the Royal Academy an artistic institution, let him think so ; if he thinks the Guildhall School anything more than an overgrown barracks with glass doors to the teaching rooms, and our provincial festivals anything

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more than overgrown church bazaars, let him continue to think these things also. But for those of us who want to see a real musical life in England, this question of the musical festivals is becoming a serious one. There is to-day in England a rapidly deepening and broadening interest in music. We do not think much of the fact that thousands of youngsters present themselves every year to be examined by incompetent examiners sent from London. The whole examination side of music is tainted, is corrupted, by the presence of the commercial element. The examiners examine because they are paid to examine; the examinees submit themselves to examination in the hope—or rather, nowadays, the certainty—of winning certificates, which may enable them to gain pupils, whom they will teach because they are paid. If to examine anyone or to be examined by anyone were made a criminal offence to-morrow or even to-day, we should merely rejoice in an unobtrusive way. The multitudes of examinations, then, count for nothing. But the crowds who attend orchestral concerts, the crowds who run to hear opera, the increasing number of operatic companies, the attempts to form municipal bands—these things count for something. And it counts for something, too, that in all parts of the country there are ardent young men writing their symphonies pathétique, and symphonic poems, and concert overtures, and music dramas in seventeen nights and a fore-evening. From this intense desire to create and the growing desire to hear music, one might reasonably anticipate some good result. The result might be the establishment of orchestras throughout the country, the establishment of opera in all the larger towns and the growth of a genuinely English school of composers. Shall we in our time see anything of the sort? We fear not; we

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fear that no movement will result in any great things so long as the provincial festival remains what it is at present.

At present it does not even pretend to be an artistic affair. It is a kind of charity bazaar. Support is asked for it on the ground that it is a charity bazaar. The profits are divided amongst deserving hospitals and clergymen's orphans. Only a small fee can be offered to composers for new cantatas, oratorios and symphonic works, because there must be something left to divide amongst the hospitals and deserving clergymen's orphans. Music, being a beggar, as Mr. Bernard Shaw once said, must be robbed to save the rich from supporting their own hospitals and charities. That is a chief part of the provincial festival's offence. It absorbs the money, and often the energy, that should be devoted to music. People think they have done quite enough for music when they have taken their sets of tickets, although they must know in their heart of hearts that they are merely getting the music thrown in cheap, as it were, and in reality are paying indirectly to their charities. They think they have done quite enough for music, and they have done nothing. For what music do they hear? The "Messiah," "Elijah" and perhaps a couple of new cantatas; and with a couple of new cantatas, "Elijah" and the "Messiah," they seem willing to go on for ever and ever. The new cantatas are rarely worth much, for not much is paid for them; and composers must live. The performances of the old works are rarely fine, for the orchestra is mainly brought from London; and as it is brought at the last moment, the time available for rehearsal is inadequate. With the money paid for tickets it would be quite possible to give superb performances, model performances, that would serve as an example and a standard to the rest of

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England; but this cannot be done—the money is wanted for hospitals and clergymen's orphans. Let it be understood that we have nothing to say against hospitals, which are absolutely necessary, or clergymen's orphans, who may not be absolutely necessary, but are doubtless a very deserving as well as unfortunate class. If the money was openly subscribed for them, if it was understood that the festival was merely, like the church bazaar, a lever to raise the money from tight-buttoned British pockets, we should have no objections to make. For then music might modestly present its little claim; and the present excuse for not responding could not be given. If people obstinately refused to support music, at anyrate they would not be able to congratulate themselves on supporting music. We should get rid of a lot of hypocrisy to begin with, and the national conscience would be in so much the healthier condition. We should be in a position to begin the real work of organising musical entertainments throughout the country. It might be that those folk who are at present duped, would cease to support the charity-festival, and give directly what they wished to charity; it might even be that those rich people who are not dupes, but know perfectly well what they are doing, would be shamed into doing something for music. What we strongly object to in the present state of affairs is the erroneous supposition that a great deal is being done for music, when, as a matter of fact, nothing is being done for music, but everything for charity.

If every county in England teemed with musicians and musical amateurs, and the musicians once in three years or once a year chose to give a huge show with the intention of raising money for the hospitals, there would be nothing to object to. But the truth is that the charity-festival is

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a principal cause why every county in England does not teem either with musicians or musical amateurs. The charity-festival makes for centralisation, one of the curses of music in England. "Local talent" has a very poor show at the charity-festival. In most cases the conductor is brought from London or Germany; the band is brought from London; the solo singers are brought from London; a great part of the audience is brought from London or from the neighbouring counties. The local musicians are rigorously kept outside; they are told that they would not draw the money required for the charities; and they may starve and watch the overworked, overpaid "stars" from London taking the bread from their own and their children's mouths, to the end that what may flourish?—Music?—does anyone venture to say to the end that music may flourish? It is certainly a quaint idea this, that music is helped by devoting all the money that can be spared for music into the pockets of a few rich musicians, while the mass of the country's musicians find it hard to earn a livelihood! As if we could have a widespread musical life without plenty of musicians! At present there is no encouragement whatever for any musician to settle in the country and try to educate his benighted neighbours. He would have a chance—a poor one, but still a chance—if he and the men he gathered about him got the money which at present comes to London. Even if expenses were kept down for sweet charity's sake, there would still be something for him once in three years. But now the festivals kill every other enterprise, and then, when the festival time comes, those who have been discouraged and starved are told that there is nothing for them: they may earn their five shillings a night in the

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local theatre or music-hall, while fiddlers and singers from London take everything. The case is made the more exasperating by our knowledge that the local musicians might very well be employed, and most likely would be employed, but for the fact that the festivals are run entirely by people who know nothing about music and care very little about it. Being provincials—local mayors, town clerks, justices of the peace, and what not—they are tremendously impressed by London and the London man, just as those provincials the St. Paul's Cathedral authorities are impressed by Sir William Richmond; they are conquered by the airs the London man—very properly, from a business point of view—always gives himself in the provinces. Besides, they know that the people who support the festivals are as boorish and foolish as themselves and as much impressed by the London man; and as their own notion is to get money, they have every possible encouragement to give the London man the preference. If they had a Bach or Mozart in their neighbourhood, they would push him aside and engage Mr. Smith from Kensington.

Our indictment of the provincial musical festival, then, is this: it diverts to charity the money that should go to music; it actually prevents innocent people giving to music what they might give if they knew their festival subscriptions were entirely devoted to charity; it represses musical activity in its vicinity; it prevents the standard of musical performances rising to the height it has reached in London; it inflicts on a suffering country a flood of tenth-rate cantatas written by musicians who must live, and are not adequately paid for the production of good music; it fosters a habit of artistic gluttony in those who hear no music for three years,

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and then are compelled to hear a dozen concerts in a week—a most revolting exhibition. In the case of the Gloucester, Hereford, and Worcester festivals, one of these charges does not hold: they are run by local musicians. But in the case of Birmingham, Leeds, and Norwich, there is not a word to be withdrawn. Yorkshire is cursed with Leeds, Norfolk with Norwich, Warwick with Birmingham. The case of London, again, is quite different. Mr. Newman's festival is not a festival in the ordinary sense of the word. It is not the one opportunity in three years of hearing music on the grand scale. Local musicians are necessarily employed—for Lamoureux's orchestra is merely in the position of a foreign pianist whom we are glad to hear at intervals—the longer the better. We shall satisfy our curiosity by hearing a few much talked-of new works, works which we should not hear at all but for Mr. Newman and his festival. Few people, excepting the critics, will be so indecent as to indulge in the open gluttony of attending twelve concerts in a week. When it is over, indeed while it is proceeding, other concerts will go on as before. It is run as a financial speculation, as all musical concerns ought to be run, the labourer being worthy of his hire, or as much of it as he can secure.

THE LONDON OPERA SEASON, 1899

THE ideal opera season is for London, it appears, a thing unimaginable. All physical circumstances, all social etiquette in this country, all influence, the very system of leasing theatres under which we suffer—these are some of the dead weights that lie up against it. Add to this the perfectly irresponsible attitude of most of the critics to whom a change in the hour for dining is of infinitely greater importance than the hearing of one act of any opera, and the tale is more or less complete. I read week by week in various quarters bitter stories of the encroachments made upon coffee by theatres that call critics half an hour earlier than their customary time of finishing their food. "As the Teutonic element"—the sentence, for instance, catches my eye on the instant—"not unnaturally prefers twelve pence for each shilling (or, in other words, Wagner without 'cuts'), the performance will, as a rule, commence at half-past seven. Those benighted individuals who prefer late dining to five hours of unadulterated Wagner, may come in after the first or second acts." That was written, understand well, by a "musical" critic a few days ago, with clearly a distinct idea that he was being rather witty—such is the complacency of the writing. "Benighted individuals," "unadulterated Wagner"—are we not getting a trifle tired of this ancient and fish-like stock-in-trade? And is not this sort of stuff

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which is allowed to pass for criticism of music by faultily indifferent editors just the kind of thing which goes so largely to help London towards the rejection of anything like a truly artistic opera? Of course, to write so is to court inevitable mockery from the critics, who imagine that when they have once used that magic phrase "the younger generation," they have laughed the whole question out of court. There, however, they remain, and there remains with them the influence which they certainly at the present time possess in the councils of the mighty. That under other conditions we might have an opera which is more serious in its ambitions and in its aims, there is the example of other countries to show. Look at Bayreuth, look at Munich, look at Vienna, look at, yes, Monte Carlo, where within the most limited resources of space an opera was recently produced with a finish and perfection that showed far better than anything we have ever been allowed to witness at Covent Garden in past days: and tell me then, that it is ridiculous to ask for anything better than that which is provided year by year at Covent Garden. I will tell you in reply that if it is ridiculous, it is not because nothing better can be obtained, but because the conditions under which opera is given make it almost impossible that such amelioration should be looked for and expected.

Consider what an opera season in London is—or rather has been; for this year we are told that all our geese will be swans, and that the revelation has come upon us. (How far a man may believe this need not be discussed here, but one may remember that those conditions of which I have spoken still remain unremoved.) "Now, say frankly," that ingenious pleader, Mr. Neil Forsyth, will possibly ask during an interval between two acts—"say frankly if you could better that cast

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in any of the opera-houses which you take as ideal. Look at that programme: Jean de Reszke as Lohengrin, Eames as Elsa, Bispham as Telramund, Edouard de Reszke as Henry the Fowler, Pringle as the Herald—where will that array of names be equalled among performances in the world?" And you bow to Mr. Forsyth's unanswerable reasoning. Of course it is a fact that no such casts, except in New York, can anywhere be found. We all know that. It is that fact which makes Covent Garden what it is, as it is fire which makes the sun to shine, as it is chlorophyll which turns the leaves of the trees green. "Who deniges of it, Betsy?" Yet, however emphatically such a fact may be asserted, it cannot for one moment be maintained that it makes an opera all that it should be. Come now, Mr. Forsyth, or whatsoever special pleader you may be, who have taken up the temporary cudgels for Covent Garden—come now; I will tell you that I have seen "Lohengrin" performed at the Munich Hof-Theater with a cast not worth a twentieth part, so far as the principal singers are concerned, that of which you so reasonably boast here in London, and with so confident a voice. And yet that Munich performance gave me the opera, the music-drama as it was written, the play involved with the music, whereas at Covent Garden I heard a series of songs quite beautifully sung, while I was to a peculiarly large extent uninformed concerning the true significance of the passing drama. In a word, you may select stars and stars, and provide what is, if you please, an exquisite entertainment for the human ear, and you may nevertheless be as far from producing an artistic opera as you were in the beginning, before you thought to make a plan. I confess with the utmost candour—and, moreover, I have a keen enjoyment in this particular form of exquisite

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entertainment—that this is the only method by which Covent Garden can enjoy a serious and reputable fame; but I maintain with equal emphasis that you do not get opera, fine cast or not, as it should be obtained in so important a capital as ours.

Remember for a moment the "Ring des Nibelungen," as given last year in London. Here was the intention, combined with a most earnest practical effort, to give Wagner in the proper spirit. How did it succeed? We heard some magnificent singing, some vocal declamation unsurpassable in this generation, some glorious details gloriously fulfilled. But think of the fiasco of "Siegfried" when the Philistine brayed with joy to find that the old cuts were still maintained; and think further of that worse fiasco of "Götterdämmerung" when the hall of the Gibichungs collapsed half an hour before its appointed time of collapse, when surely Felix Mottl would have been amply justified in calling for chairs, and insisting that the second part of the last act should be treated as mere concert work. Remember again, that this was an honest and vigorous attempt to throw aside the numbing traditions that had frozen around the Covent Garden methods of art, and you will see how nearly I have been correct in my general estimation of the present conditions of opera in London.

But now we are upon a new season. The millennium is at hand. The theatre itself has been made to look as young as electric light can make it. There is a new smoking-lounge, a new drop-curtain, a new instalment of electricity. A retinue of singers whose names are to a large extent unknown, but whose reputation runs before them like the morning star, has been engaged, and nearly all the very old favourites come trooping gaily to join the festive throng.

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I will deal with the throng a little later on. At present, be it known to all, that with one possible exception there will be no novelties of any kind. "Messaline," for example, which it would have been so quick an act of grace (and also of business, for that matter) to produce, is not to be heard, at all events this year, on the Covent Garden stage. The cautious game may here be the paying game, but it is not sporting. . . . Still the cautious game has its advantages. The public knows beforehand exactly what it has to expect, and it pays accordingly. We are told, however, that the imperative demands of certain among the subscribers will make it necessary to revive work belonging to elder schools of opera. That is quite as it should be; for Covent Garden cannot afford to be intolerant. But it is to be hoped that the performances of such operas, whether by Gluck, by Mozart, by Rossini, by Donizetti, or by the earlier Verdi, may be given with the utmost attention to scenic and dramatic detail. Let Covent Garden take warning by the performance given last year of "Don Giovanni." There, again, was a cast almost unsurpassable, headed by Renaud as the Don. Yet so wanton was the presentation of the drama, so botched and patched and dislimbed, that no singing possible could save it from damnation.

The twelve German performances of Wagnerian opera are fixed between Monday, May 8 and June 17 inclusive, with reasonable intervals. Frau Lili Lehmann, Frau Gadsby, Mme. Nordica, Frau Mottl, Fräulein Seiffert, and Mlle. Litvinne, make up a formidable list of prima donnas for these special occasions. Here, however, I need not discuss the details of events which will have become things of the past, will have wandered back into eternity, before many readers of the *Chord* read these lines. I sum up the whole matter of this

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1899 opera season, from the point of view of one standing upon its brink, somewhat on this wise. Under the necessary condition of present things, I must not believe that London can ever hope to see an opera untrammelled by a thousand interests which divide it this way and that way from the true straight line of artistic excellence. Subscribers have their indifferences, their hatreds and their attachments; and subscribers have to be catered for at every turn. Then that very excellence of particular singers which is the one white flower of Covent Garden's not altogether blameless life, disorganises the coherence of a drama in which every other detail tends in the long-run to be sacrificed. With these disadvantages, it is nevertheless possible that some modifications should be made to these conditions. It is possible that the stage-management should be largely improved, and that the lighting should throughout be bettered. It is possible that strong and stringent treatment of the chorus may result in a general tightening of the dramatic ropes. In a word, it is possible that, by the shading here of the high lights, by the turning up (as it were) of the low lights, a more reasonable, a more diffused illumination, from the dramatic point of view, may be cast over the footlights. And that would be much, though it would be no more than we have a right to expect from the multifarious preparation that has been made. Shining, if all these expectations be fulfilled, will be the glory of the syndicate. For though there would still be something imperfect, and necessarily imperfect in the results, there will still be signs of right effort and of a worthy desire to minimise all essential faults.

Vernon Blackburn.

MUSIC IN ARCADIA

SENTENCE of exile had been passed on me—of exile from that paradise which is bounded on the north by Queen's Hall, on the west by the Albert Hall, on the south by the Crystal Palace, and on the east by Covent Garden; and at the gates there stood doctors waving stethoscopes, as it were flaming swords that turned this way and that. The strains of the Queen's Hall orchestra grew faint behind me, Wagnerian cycles became as dream-like as the wheels of Ezekiel, and even the Popular Concerts took on, in memory, an air of antique romance which they had not worn when I might have gone to all of them, and did not. And now the world was all before me, where to choose, though certain stringent injunctions of the guardian doctors had to be regarded. Pure air, early hours, simple food, and music that should be only moderately exciting—these were to characterise my place of exile. I shall not weary you by telling of the processes of exhaustion by which I finally decided that here, in the remote corner from which I write, I would pitch my tent. It is sufficient that the prospect was wholly Arcadian. Here, I was assured, the air was pure, the cooking plain—alas, how plain I did not guess!—the hours early—for there was nothing to do; the music scant in quantity, and by no means exciting. The gods alone, it seemed, could have directed me thither, and I dreamed of quiet years in

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which I should construct a new Eden of my own, where the serpent of jealousy entered not, where the clamour of opposing factions was never heard, where my neighbours lived without jealousy or meanness or scandal. Judge now whether Arcadia is as peaceful as it looked, and whether Strephon and old Damœtas, Chloe and Amaryllis, are such wholly pastoral and amiable creatures as you had supposed.

It is necessary to acquaint you, in outline at least, with the condition of musical society in Arcadia. We are not wholly agricultural in our pursuits here, and indeed most of the eighty thousand souls who compose our little community—though I do not think, to be quite accurate, that they all possess souls—are engaged in business of various kinds, and have but a few hours weekly to give to so unprofitable a matter as music. Still, for those who are minded to such frivolity, there is quite an imposing array of professors of music. Most of them are old, and firmly established in business; but some are young, and it is to be noted that in proportion to the youthfulness of these is the multiplicity of their educational pretensions. The older men are content to give lessons in four or five branches of music only: as you recede from the age of experience and probable knowledge, you discover that the number of subjects taught varies inversely with the years of the teacher, until callow youths of twenty undertake gaily to give instruction not only in the history and theory of music, but on all the instruments of the modern orchestra. As far as my researches have extended, the saxhorn and the Pythagorean lyre are the only instruments in the manipulation of which it is not possible to be instructed in Arcadia. With all this wealth of educational resources at hand, you would suppose that our standard of attainment must be very high. Well—when in the long

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hours of my *nuits blanches* I recall my saddest experiences, I always remember a certain performance by female Arcadians of the Seventh Symphony of Beethoven, in which the wind was represented by two concertinas. And when we have our annual concert of the Arcadian Choral Society, which alternates "Elijah" and "Messiah" with touching fidelity, I am sorry to admit that we have to import from London a special trainful of strings, harps, oboes, clarinets, and all other "kinds of musick."

For we have a Choral Society, in which dissenting lions and conforming lambs lie down in weekly agreement. The concerts, it is true, do not pay their expenses, and the Society exists financially by virtue of the generosity of its conductor, a wealthy amateur who contradicts the general theory that it is hard, if not impossible, for them that have riches to enter the kingdom of art. He has followed as hard after music as though it were a desirable vice, and is on his way to becoming that rare thing, a good conductor. He has not yet, however, been entirely successful in his endeavours to convince his fellow-Arcadians that music is a serious thing, worth some sacrifice of time and even of money; and the only occasions on which we turn out in force, and pay our crowns with anything approaching alacrity, are those on which Madame Antoinette Sterling comes to sing, in her own inimitable fashion, "The Better Land" and "The Lost Chord." Then, indeed, we touch the stars in our enthusiasm, and feel that we are an integral part of the great musical world.

We contrive to extract considerable amusement from the proceedings of the person who is sometimes allowed to write the musical criticisms in our daily paper. He is not content with standing in the good old ways in which

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provincial critics have stood so long, but must needs try to upset all our old notions with foolish ideas picked up in the course of some years spent in such places as London and Paris and Milan. We—for I am already beginning to identify myself with the Arcadians—do not understand how he ever crept into the circles with which he seems to be familiar; but most of us knew him at school, so that it is obviously impossible that he should know more about music than we do. When, therefore, he has the audacity to tell us that Madame Sterling, for instance, does not know how to sing; when he suggests that a titled amateur is not necessarily a great artist; when, in a still more daring mood, he declares that Mendelssohn and J. F. Barnett are not the greatest composers of the century;—why, then we meet in hotel-bars and other places and write indignant letters to the paper, assuring the editor of his critic's incompetence. At present our efforts do not seem to produce much effect, for the foolish editor backs his critic with misplaced loyalty; but we have hopes for the future, since we have enlisted on our side a local violinist, whom we call "the English Sarasate." This excellent gentleman, who is also a master of skittles, assures us that the critic is wholly ignorant of the subjects whereon he writes, and, since it was he who gave the critic his first lessons in music, he is obviously justified in his opinion.

With such pleasant suavity does our life pass here, free from the unhealthy stimulants of art and letters, that strong nerves and good digestion seem once more almost within my reach. So presently I shall be called on to make a momentous decision: shall I return to places where it is possible to hear at least one good concert a month, or shall I remain in this quiet atmosphere, disturbed only by yearly "Elijahs"

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and occasional Sterlings? I could easily persuade myself to continue in this blessed inactivity, were I sure that our Arcadian peace would never be broken. But I cannot forget that there are busybodies abroad who are bent, forsooth, on the musical education of their harmless neighbours; and I ask myself what would happen if we were to be suddenly invaded by lecturers and writers and artists, all determined to educate us against our wills. Pupils would demand to be taught seriously, and so absorb the energies of our professors; perhaps the number of concerts would be multiplied, and people would begin to aspire, vaguely at first but afterwards with definite insistence, towards some higher artistic level; the pleasant paths of mediocrity would become stony and painful. When I began to write, I was not altogether sure of my own sympathies, but as I meditate on these horrid possibilities, I am all for Arcadia and her ancient peace. Before cantankerous educators shall have penetrated into these wilds, I shall, I hope, be lying beneath some quaintly scripted marble; and shaggy shepherds will bid the curious traveller to approach and read ("for thou canst read") the lay: *Etiam in Arcadiâ ego*.

Exsul.

THE ORCHESTRA AND ITS DEGENERATION

NOT only to the man in the street, but also to the ordinary musician, who perhaps ought to be in the street, the orchestra is the orchestra. Professors teach how to write for the orchestra, and people go to hear the orchestra. We all, I deeply regret to say, speak about hearing a certain work on the orchestra as calmly as we might speak of hearing another work on the piano. I suggest that it is time we began asking ourselves what we mean by the orchestra. Does any haphazard assemblage of instruments, with players attached, constitute an orchestra, just as in Northumberland any collection of second-hand battered brass and wooden instruments, together with gentlemen who can or cannot blow rightly into them, constitute what the not mute and not locally inglorious Mottls and Richters proudly denominate the village Brass Band? Of course everyone will reply that he has often asked himself the question, and everyone with even a rudimentary conscience will guiltily recognise that he has never before given the matter a moment's consideration. For several reasons it is worth more than a moment's consideration.

Let us take the less important of these reasons first. What an improvement, for instance, might follow in the conducting of some of our native musicians who occasionally

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take the baton in hand! For generations English musicians have regarded the orchestra as the easiest of all instruments to play. They have taken up the stick, beat one, two, three, four in a bar, and sailed gaily through the finest symphonies, thanking their stars that a number of underpaid fiddlers and flautists, and not their overpaid selves, had the work to do. That is the kind of conducting the Philharmonic concerts have made us familiar with. But supposing conductors of this sort to realise that the orchestra Mozart wrote for was not at all the kind of orchestra they were playing his works on, might they not find salvation in endeavouring to produce Mozart's intended effect? And even conductors very much more intelligent than these non-conductors might learn much from a consideration of that important fact. When Mottl plays Handel, Bach, or Gluck, what stupendous results he would get by imagining the music as it must have sounded originally and trying to reproduce what he thus hears with his mental ear!

Another, and a more important, point is this. The pious professors of Europe are good enough to teach orchestration to students. They tell us how Wagner, Berlioz, and other extravagants have for "special effects" used "extra" instruments; and they advise us by no means to use these "extra" instruments until we are certain we have the genius of a Berlioz or a Wagner, and unless we have already invented "special effects" which warrant their use. As if a "special effect" were a thing that could be invented in the abstract, and then fitted to certain instruments! It reminds one of the ancient recipe for making a hole in a piece of wood without the proper tool. You cut the hole out of cardboard, then take a hammer and drive it into the wood. Whoever has succeeded in doing this, will

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without difficulty succeed in inventing effects without using instruments. The professors also talk as though there was a kind of standard orchestra as there is a standard pitch—or rather, as there are several standard pitches—and as if it was a crime or something near one to endeavour to improve on this orchestra. Were they to ask themselves my question they too might realise that there never was a standard orchestra, and that they are somewhat in the position of a man who should undertake to give instruction in the art of piano-playing without being sure of the difference between a piano and a concertina. From its earliest moments the orchestra has grown by fits and starts, and rarely in two towns have two orchestras playing the same music been at all alike. I don't mean alike in size: that would matter little were the proportions the same. I mean that in Mozart's time, Beethoven's time, Wagner's time and our own time, the proportions of the different parts of different orchestras have differed widely. To-day in some cases the strings seem calculated to overwhelm the wind; in others there are only two violas against an enormous mass of first violins; in others, again, they are short of double-basses or horns or tubas; and so on, and so on. No one is really learning to orchestrate who is not learning how to take advantage, or to evade the difficulties, of these various states of affairs: ergo, the customary way of teaching instrumentation from the text-books is utterly fatuous. Still more fatuous is the discouragement of the use of "extra" instruments for any other than practical reasons. If I want my proposed great symphony pathétique played by Mr. Henry Wood's orchestra at Queen's Hall, I should certainly write for the instruments at Mr. Henry Wood's disposal. But if I were writing, like Charles Lamb, for

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antiquity, I should write for whatever instruments I imagined I knew how to use effectively for my purpose, the history of orchestra from its beginnings to the present time having taught us that those instruments will come into use, and be added to the permanent orchestral stock, so soon as we can persuade half a dozen people that our music is really worth playing. The professors are blind leaders of the blind, deaf teachers of singing to the deaf; for surely only the blind will be led, or the deaf taught, by them.

There has never been a standard orchestra. From the commencement the orchestra has been, like all things, in a state of flux; and during the last century the changes have been enormous. It seems worth asking whether all the vast improvements in the manufacture of instruments have not resulted in some very bad as well as in some undoubtedly good things. With increased facility of execution, has there not departed something of the old beauty of tone from certain instruments, has there not even come something of a positive ugliness? The question answers itself at once. Within the period of the present musical generation beauty has gone out and ugliness come in to a startling degree. Few can have failed to notice it. Moreover, even where beauty has not altogether left certain instruments, the special quality has often left them which was the source and the cause of the beauty of many of the combinations which the masters devised. Now even beauty without character becomes intolerable in an instrument, just as it does in a woman or a cat; and character is going so quickly that one anticipates the speedy arrival of the day when it will be impossible to distinguish between the newest form of clarinet and the newest form of oboe, between the most up-to-date horn and the most up-to-date tuba or trombone.

The Orchestra and its Degeneration

The causes of this general decay of the orchestra are many. If we consider the strings first, the most potent cause is certainly the German invasion—the invasion of German orchestral players, with their German thoroughness and discipline it is true, but also with their fatal German inaccuracy of ear, their more fatal insusceptibility and indifference to beauty of tone, and, worst of all, their German machine-made fiddles. The late Sir Augustus Harris did many highly useful things ; but I wish he could have undone the harmful consequences of importing a pack of raw German violinists into Covent Garden. It may be remembered that this brilliant herd came armed with fiddles of such deadly effect that the occupants of the stalls and boxes were mown down nightly as if by Maxim-guns ; and Sir Augustus had to fit the band out with instruments less dangerous. Now an English player is generally proud of his fiddle, and confidently believes that from no other in the world can such lovely sounds be drawn ; and one may feel certain that whatever may be the ability he possesses, he does honestly try, and gets an unaffected pleasure from trying, to produce lovely sounds. But Sir Augustus Harris's German contingent not only did not try for lovely sounds, but had not the faintest apprehension of the difference between their eleven-mark fiddles and the finest Stradivarius. They were first dumped down in the middle of an English orchestra to coarsen our Englishmen's ears ; and afterwards turned loose to lower the standard of beauty in string tone all over London. No conductor, no bandsman, no one of the public, could grow so familiar with such noises as no longer to wince when he heard them, without experiencing consciously or unconsciously a distinct falling off in taste. Of course the invasion commenced before Sir Augustus Harris's time,

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and it goes on still ; Germans continue to pour into London armed with their implements of torture, and recommendations and impudence which gain them posts. But we are hopeful that little more harm will proceed from this, now that a conductor of the calibre of Henry Wood, and with his accurate ear and acute sensitiveness to beauty, selects the men for the band which is now the standard by which all other English bands are judged. Yet although the German may cease to have power to vulgarise us, nothing but the utmost alertness will save the string portion of our orchestras from descending lower and ever lower. Ugliness seems almost to be in the air. London is an appallingly ugly city ; its skies are seldom clear and beautiful ; our clothes are ugly ; our habits of life and our daily thoughts are free from any charm or suspicion of loveliness. Bandsmen cannot but suffer, even if they were the most passionate lovers of beauty in the world, which, to do them justice, they seldom are. True, they are the finest bandsmen in the world, and they have a certain sense of beauty ; but it needs careful fostering, and they need to be protected from all things that make for ugliness. A very effective way of getting a hideous tone quality from a band is that of underpaying and overworking them ; temper ensues, and never yet did a man or a collection of men play beautifully in a bad temper. And even if there should be no bad temper, the men's feeling that they are earning their bread under hard conditions is like a corrosive acid that eats the enthusiasm out of them—they become indifferent, cease to care whether they play well or not, and the artist in them decays.

The causes of the decadence of the wind and brass are somewhat different. The insidious German has only a little to do with it, though it is worthy of note that he has a little.

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In nearly every case, when a German player of a wind instrument has been brought to England to show how the thing should be done, he has distinguished himself, and scared us, by the positively frightful coarseness of his tone. He may have possessed intelligence and have been in many respects a true artist: a producer of beautiful sounds he never was. Why, even when a German drummer was once brought over for the "Nibelung's Ring," he burst his drum before he had been here a week. This was, however, excused on account of his intellectual reading of the kettle-drum part of "Siegfried." But the loss of beauty and of character in the wood-wind and the brass is not, I say, due to German drummers, German wind or brass players, or even—to any appreciable extent—German instruments. It is due to the extraordinary nineteenth-century craze for making everything do something which it is not in its nature to do—to this, to a crude form of the longing of the nineteenth-century man to get all he can out of himself, and to the common degeneration of the organ of beauty in the nineteenth-century brain. We see this craze in a thousand manifestations. A music-hall audience is never so delighted as when a parcel of monkeys or dogs or cats or parrots is turned loose and made to imitate man in his foolishlest moments. A dog that can pretend to be drunk, or boxes with another dog, is a prime favourite. On the other hand, a man who can produce noises somewhat resembling the bark of a dog or the mew of a cat or the crowing of a cock, is assured of a livelihood. If he can successfully imitate the drawing of a cork and the subsequent fizz of champagne, he is a prince amongst entertainers. But indeed the craze takes a thousand shapes, and is to be observed in the streets, in the church, in the sacred English home, and in the concert-room and opera-house.

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We find the double-bass player priding himself on harmonics which suggest in a very far-away manner the tones of a flute ; we find the flute-player pricking out the ghost of a melody in his lowest octave and accompanying it with flourishes in his upper registers, so as to suggest the double-stopping of the violin ; we find the piano-player trying to get organ effects by playing Bach's organ fugues in a sufficiently ponderous manner on the piano ; and as for the organ-player, there is no instrument, bird or animal he does not try to imitate on what he still persists in calling the King of Instruments. The King is made to indulge in the sincerest form of flattery of his humblest subjects and lackeys. This craze, then, added to the self-consciousness and desire for self-display which have entered so into modern life, and to the ultra-modern anxiety of each man to be more or less of a complete microcosm in himself, has resulted disastrously for the flutes, the oboes, the clarinets, the horns, the trumpets, and the trombones. The flautist is not satisfied with the agility of his instrument in all its registers,—its low, pathetic sweetness in the bottom register, its sufficient shrillness in the top register : he must have something of the rich fulness of the clarinet ; his instrument must be large enough and powerful enough to make itself heard through all the tempest of a full modern orchestra. The clarinettist is no longer content with the characteristic tones and effects of his instrument : he wants the agility of the flute and its high notes. The magnificent reediness of his bottom register is going, the noble expressive diapason of the middle register is going, the raucous harshness of the upper register—which might be used with splendid results—is going also. The thing is becoming a vapid hybrid ; it is losing its own gorgeous individuality to become a poor imitator of the flute (which

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in turn, as we said, is becoming a poor imitator of the clarinet). The oboe is losing its deliciously piquant reediness; the bassoon is losing its characteristic quality—suggestive of a smooth, round tube of tone with a harsh strand woven through the centre—to become colourless, polished and gentlemanly. The trumpet has almost ceased to exist; since the cornet became so popular on account of its ear-shattering, nerve-shattering, cracked brilliancy, all the brass instruments have tried to become like it. The true trumpet should be bold, brilliant, proud as Lucifer; but its brilliance and pride should be the shining brilliance and pride, insolence if you like, of nobly worked silver or gold, not the lawyer-like showiness and impudence of cheap, machine-hammered brass. In Purcell's time a celebrated trumpet-player (Snow, we believe, was his name) could move an audience almost, or quite, to tears by the pathos of his playing; they said it was as sweet at times as an oboe. Now the oboe at that time must have been a great deal more powerful than it is to-day; still, can anyone imagine any of our trumpet-players producing a tone bearing the faintest resemblance to the tone of the most powerful oboe? Our players cannot play a legato melody; I have never heard Purcell's, or Handel's, or Bach's parts, written for the true trumpet, so much as passably played. The art is lost, and the instrument itself seems likely soon to be lost. This same lust for greater brassiness devours the horn-players also. Neither in Germany nor in France can you ever by any chance hear the true horn quality; and in England there are few players and fewer instruments that can produce it. The trombones have so far suffered least of all the brass family—a great deal of their nobility still remains; but even they show signs of developing into tenor and bass cornets. When Mr. Schulz-Curtius

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wanted a bass trumpet made, he had the greatest difficulty in finding a maker who would not insist on giving him simply a bass cornet. As for the tubas, the less said about them the better. There are not half-a-dozen good tubas in England. They are sometimes like horns, sometimes like cornets, sometimes like trombones; sometimes they are like a German brass band. No maker seems to know the essential quality of the tuba tone—an almost sullen solidity, a tone something like that of an old-fashioned diapason on a fine organ, yet with something militant, suggestive of brass, in it. And our players handle it lightly and skittishly, trying, it would seem, to make it appear a well-bred instrument that can be relied on not to misconduct itself in a drawing-room.

On the whole, it may be said that all the wind instruments seem to be trying to become like one another, and all the brass instruments to be trying to become like one another, just as in society circles all the gentlemen try to become like one another, it being reckoned bad form to possess any individuality. It remains to be said that beauty, like character, is going very fast. Indeed, the beauty and character of the wind instruments are so closely interfused as to be practically the same thing. The special beauty of the true flute lies in the sweetness of the instrument, in the miraculous pathos of its lowest register; of the oboe in its sweet reediness; of the clarinet in its nobility and richness. Take away these, and there is nothing left but a bastard instrument that can play certain parts and has nothing else to recommend it. I have mentioned some of the causes of this unhappy degeneration; but there are one or two others which we have not yet mentioned. The machine-made instrument is responsible for a good deal. The old instru-

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ment, carefully made and carefully tested, just as a violin was made and tested, was an individual thing. One cannot doubt that the makers knew how well they had succeeded as they laid down each finished instrument. But now "prices have come down"; for cheapness' sake the instruments are made to a pattern by the hundred, and if one happens to be rather better than another it is by mere chance. Then again, especially in the case of the wood-wind, the desire for greater facility in execution has counted for much. A flute, or clarinet, or oboe, must nowadays be able to play in any key without the player having to "fake" to get his intonation true, and in their passionate desire for technical excellence the makers and the players have both forgotten beauty. There are a dozen causes of the degeneration; but whatever the causes, the result is the same—loss of character, loss of beauty.

So far, I have only placed the shadows in the picture; the picture is only half finished. In my next article on the subject I shall show how a process of improvement and building-up has gone on concurrently with this process of degeneration and decay; and I hope also to be able to show how easily the orchestra might be made an almost perfect instrument.

John F. Runciman.

A MUSIC-ROOM

IT is given to comparatively few of us to live in houses which have been built expressly for us, with all our pet theories carried out and all our hobbies provided for. House-designing and house-building, like most things in modern life, are now a wholesale business. It is cheaper to build a row of houses all alike than to build the same number of detached houses all different, and so it comes to pass that most of us must try to put up with a ready-made article such as the speculator in tastes imagines will be most likely to suit the average man.

It is for the average man that this paper is written, rather than for dukes and princes ; because the average man, and certainly the average reader of *The Chord*, is sure to have some hobby which he finds it difficult to ride, because it did not enter into the calculations of the speculator who planned his house. A man may be fond of billiards, for example, and yet not care to leave home and spend the evening playing in a public room ; but there is no room in his own ready-made house large enough to hold a table. Or he may be an enthusiast for music, and desire occasionally to invite a large company of friends to hear something on a bigger scale than one usually associates with the drawing-room ; but here again he finds himself without a room where his guests can hear in comfort the music producing its full effect. The





A Music-Room

billiard-players are constantly getting out of their difficulty by building large rooms at the backs or sides of their houses, and in the accompanying sketch we indicate such an addition designed for use as a Music-Room. We have assumed that we are dealing with the familiar double-fronted house in a row, with a long dining-room running from front to back. The Music-Room is joined to the end of the dining-room, and communicates with it by means of double doors, which can be removed when it is desired to have a noble suite for some exceptional purpose. There is, however, a separate entrance to the Music-Room from the back hall. The room is of generous proportions—say thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide, exclusive of the circular bay window and the ingle-nook. From the floor to the point where the slope of the roof begins the height is about eleven feet, and to the apex about eighteen feet. The leading features are an avoidance of meaningless ornamental accessories, and a refusal to hide the construction, which is indeed a thing not to be ashamed of, but to be boldly exposed and decoratively treated.

The heavy principals supporting the roof, with their attendant rafters, are plainly seen. The wood is darkened, and the plaster panels between are left a cream colour. The walls are panelled in American oak—fumed, and then waxed and dull polished. This, by the way, is the only proper treatment of oak. The nasty, shiny French polish should be shunned like the plague, and reliance should be placed upon the texture which beeswax alone can give.

The space between the top of the dado and the slope of the ceiling is spaced out with flat splats of oak, suggested by what is known in Warwickshire as half-timber, or black and white; but, instead of leaving the bare plaster, a richer effect

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is obtained by filling the spaces with tapestry, into the texture of which a simple decorative pattern is woven. The space over the beam to the bay window is panelled out in more elaborate patterns, such as used to be common in old Cheshire and Shropshire houses. In these panels, coats-of-arms, monograms, or musical emblems may be worked in modelled plaster. A more ambitious panel of tapestry is placed above them, and on either side of the gable window.

It must not be thought that tapestry is beyond the reach of all save the holders of heavy purses. Well-designed woven tapestry, with simple decorative patterns suitable for ordinary wall hangings, can be bought at about the same price as a really good wall-paper. Or plain tapestry, imitating the stitch of the old looms, may be dyed any colour, and embroidered by the ladies of the house. As for the figures in the panels, cartoons for these may easily be obtained at no great cost, or, better still, some young painter may be given a chance of distinguishing himself. He will almost certainly rise to the occasion much more than if his commission were for an easel picture at the same price.

The glass of the windows is the old crown sheet in leaded frames, with perhaps a dash of colour in the upper panels.

An important feature in the room is the recessed fireplace, or ingle-nook. On each side of it is placed a low oak settee, which should be lavishly supplied with well-padded cushions, covered richly enough to give colour and variety to the apartment. As the ceiling of the ingle-nook is lower than the rest of the room, it will be easy to construct a music-gallery over it—similar to the old minstrel-galleries. This gallery can be approached either by a small circular staircase from the Music-Room itself, or by a door opening on an upper landing. For the band at a dance, such a gallery

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will be invaluable, and at other times it will give the room great charm and mystery.

The general lighting of the room is not shown in the drawing, but a quaint effect can be got by projecting a lamp from the balcony like an old tavern sign.

We have not space to say much about the furniture, but we cannot resist expressing a wish for something fresh in piano-cases. The case suggested in the drawing is of oak, stained green and polished. It is designed quite simply, and depends for its effect mainly on the wrought-iron hinges, and, of course, on honesty of workmanship.

To close with a practical statement, a Music-Room, equal in size to that we have illustrated, and finished in the manner we have described, can be built and decorated for something under six hundred pounds. It is therefore within the reach of most people whose hobby demands such a room for its exercise.

Joseph Crouch and Edmund Butler.

TSCHAIKOWSKY

WHEN we have learned to distinguish between the tone-poets and the tone-painters, we shall understand Tschaikowsky a little better. I live in daily apprehension of seeing him figure decorously in a monograph among the Great Tone-poets! If we accept him at once as a miraculous tone-painter, we shall feel a little easier in his society. For the arrestive keynote quality of Tschaikowsky's music is undoubtedly its mordant Asiatic tone-colouring:—those discordant, ravishing tone-colours which the Western mind, as crystallised in the critic, is incapable of appreciating. For the Western mind lacks that subtler colour-sense which finds harmony in the coupling of magenta and scarlet, a combination welcomed with enthusiasm by the Oriental. Now, as the uneducated ear finds pleasure in simple melody alone, so the imperfectly-developed colour-sense finds ease only in the more obvious colour-harmonies. Wherefore I hold that the pure Occidental is incapable of assimilating Tschaikowsky's art, because his colour-sense is quite rudimentary and cold, and that, to sympathise with Tschaikowsky in his more repellent and bizarre moods, it is imperative that one have the Asiatic temperament and instinct for colour, if not even Aryan blood. Moreover, there is in Tschaikowsky an incorrigible Eastern childishness, which our sensible Western critics stare at in amused

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disapproval. Tschaikowsky was always "wiser than he knew"; he worked by instinct rather than by knowledge, and his mind was nothing like level with his accomplishment. His unerring intuition saved him much painful and laborious study, I have no doubt, while, at the same time, it kept his intellect comparatively inactive and undeveloped, from lack of the necessity to work. This shocking state of affairs does not commend itself to the British mind. The Western critic is always, I think, a little bewildered by Tschaikowsky, because he is, if you will pardon the suggestion, no fit judge of Tschaikowsky. That musical critic has in some few cases, we will assume, a trained judgment and a clear knowledge of music and the fitness of things. He is a tame musician who looks on Tschaikowsky much as the pachyderm who takes children for peaceful undulatory rides at the Zoo might regard a musth elephant running amôk through the terrible, glorious forest at the foot of the Himalaya. His gentle or, at least, conventional soul is all out of tune with Tschaikowsky's; those violent, vivid tone-colours shock and hurt him because they are utterly alien to him.

"Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet."

The essential Tschaikowsky, which the savage and superficial listener, unblinded by Education, instinctively sees through its non-essential wrappings, is purely Asiatic, though it has been dressed decorously by a Western culture. I firmly believe that Tschaikowsky's most violent discords result from the poverty of Western notation. He tried to express a prismatic Eastern passion in a crude, cold Western tongue. Surely he could have expressed himself better in those imperceptible degrees of tone,

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delicately indefinite as sea colours, which the Orientals use. As grey was denied him, he could but use startling black and white; he could only approximate his desire through his imperfect medium; one feels his dissatisfaction. When he is not laughing, and he spends half his life in laughter, he seems to be strenuously pursuing the Unattainable, feeling the while that he will ever be baffled;—the comforting Oriental stolidity that is his birthright having been teased and refined out of him by his Western education, and a fine edge of cultivated despair put upon him. Can it be that this mysterious sorrow owed its origin merely to the limitation of his medium? Were his wonderful Asiatic dreams beating their bright wings madly against their narrow bars, striving to break the crude semitone in half? Such an explanation of Tschaikowsky's recurrent sadness seems to me a rational and a possible one; though rumour has it that he revolved in that cycle of domestic calamity which is so beneficial, even essential, to the production of beautiful art.

At anyrate, you must admit that his discords result from the violence and subtlety of his colour-sense. The bitter sweetness of scarlet and magenta in juxtaposition was an instinct with him. His colouring was as irresponsible and casual, and to the Asiatic mind as unerring, as that of a bed of different gay flowers or the myriad turbans that bow simultaneously towards Mecca, at sunset, in waving lines of fiercely diverse colours, gorgeous, flamboyant, dreamlike, and impossible.

Violent colour does not suggest the more intimate emotions,—indeed the extreme of colour makes, perhaps, for heartlessness,—and I have known the Western soul feel Tschaikowsky harsh and unsympathetic, even incapable of

Tschaikowsky

tenderness. It does not discriminate between his sporting instinct and his heart,—two things which the majority of us blend. Wherefore it utterly misses the fine affectionateness of his nature, which holds a few of us, at least, more surely than does the sexual ecstasy of Wagner. There is a keen, salt little touch of inhumanity upon Tschaikowsky's sentiment, which is refreshing as an escape from crowded, glaring rooms into quiet, lamplit streets. He is very little troubled by sex, and his violence is all devoted to sport, and invariably misinterpreted, of course. In his music one feels the swinging exhilaration of the Hunt; the rhythmic languor of the Valse; the mad impossibility of the Trepak; and an indefatigable merriment instinct with "the essential melancholy of the comedian" and of the Slav.

For instance, the "Rimini" Fantasia is far more a description of a Boar-hunt or a Bull-fight than a tone-picture of Paolo and Francesca storm-tossed on the winds of passion. Tschaikowsky did not feel the passion he sought to portray with all due violence; therefore mutable music, which obeys sentiment alone, gave his real instinct quite faithfully, with the violence added, and produced a capital bull-fight. The "Tempest" Fantasia is an excellent transcription of a storm at sea, as those of us who are familiar with the capricious Mediterranean will hasten to admit, and there is an oft-recurring dismal note in it which I have discovered is meant to represent a fog-horn. Excellent! but a trifle grotesque, and instinct with a spirit of ribaldry. Ariel, Ferdinand, and Miranda are almost lost sight of amid the more engrossing winds and waves, or even the Kiplingesque attraction of the fog-horn. The sea is quite lifelike. Tschaikowsky was very much at one with Nature, as persons of his temperament usually are.

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Had Tschaikowsky been a poet instead of a musician, what strange verse he might have produced ! Had misleading words rather than truthful notes been his medium, what ferocious wrong-headed poems he might have written, side by side with the finest and most delicate of songs, for Tschaikowsky's intimate and endearing self is lyrical.

The Hunt and the Dance are his favourite subjects. He arranges and inspires wonderful ballets of notes, melodies of loveliest floating line, lapped in radiant orchestration ; serpentine melodies entwined with a changeful rainbow play of harmonies. You may see an ethereal Venusberg in the bewitching second movement of the Sixth Symphony, a dance which has the easy glamour of the valse, shorn of its hackneyed rhythm. The complaining cadence of pure Tschaikowskian pathos which arrests that dance seems appropriately bizarre as the cypress in an Eastern rose-garden.

Tschaikowsky's invention of wonderful curving dance tunes seems to be inexhaustible ; he brings both East and West to bear upon it : the East for colour and magnificence ; the West for motion, grace, and vitality,—for his movements are quick and lithe, with none of the heavy languor of the Nautch.

Critics say that his themes are sometimes a little bit common and expected ; and, as facility makes for vulgarity, it is to be admitted that his miraculous facility of invention and expression leads him into occasional colloquialism. His artistic conscience was rather joyous than scrupulous. To him ideas were too familiar to merit any very great care. He did not pet an idea like an only child, as less gifted and more conscientious persons are wont to do. Indeed he was somewhat careless of the single theme ; impressionist effects

Tschaikowsky

were what he aimed at and succeeded in. He had the uneducated and Oriental love of show: a positively childish love of musical spectacle. Was there ever a more gorgeous procession of notes than that in the march movement of the Pathetic Symphony? Hysterical and modern in feeling that march may be, but its fundamental cause of existence is the instinct for an Oriental magnificence. That movement is Himalayan in its magnificence. It seems to picture the tropical slopes of the Himalaya; it has the same intense, overwhelming life; the same strenuous upward and onward trend; the fierce, barbaric march theme seems to be the forest of miraculous growth, product of inordinate sun and rain; while the filmy, delicate harmonies which introduce it and play round it are the lovely creepers, parasites, and orchids that veil the Himalayan Jungle. Mark the splendid tone-colours of that march, and its flamboyant rhythm. Rhythm! Colour and rhythm are the essential Tschaikowsky: a barbaric perfection of rhythm coupled with a miraculous range of colour. Elemental and savage instincts both. Here, then, is the tangible Tschaikowsky. The intangible Tschaikowsky has a peculiarly fine sentiment of his own, an arrestively unique sentiment, overwrought and remotely faint—with the faintness of the dying ember recalling past ardours, not that of the coal which has never caught fire. It is his intimate confession of himself which moves us so in the Pathetic Symphony, apart from the actual beauty of the music: we hear a something appealing and alien crying from another world, a whole wonderful dream-world "east of Suez." But there is something stranger than the East in it. It has the weird, inhuman pathos of the "Erlking," the instinct for Death. This instinct for death veins Tschaikowsky's personality. His colouring is essentially decadent, for all its intensity. It has the autumn

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splendours of decay, wine dark and blood bright. One feels always that Tschaikowsky's colours could never take on an intenser brilliancy: if they change, they must grow paler, they must die; for they have overtouched the zenith of life.

Israfel.

RENOUVEAU

COMME la nature, éternellement changeante, l'art, éternellement en marche, a ses saisons : ses étés fertiles, ses automnes mélancoliques, ses hivers noirs, ses printemps radieux. Certaines personnes croient que, par un mauvais effet de la souveraine puissance du dieu Richard Wagner, l'éclat de la musique française s'est assombri, et elles s'imaginent que tous nos jeunes maîtres, sans exception, évoluent à cette heure dans des brouillards difficiles à percer. A supposer que ces personnes aient raison, il en faut conclure qu'un grand Renouveau se prépare chez nous. C'est ce que je voudrais démontrer en examinant la situation faite à nos compositeurs par le triomphe très légitime et malheureusement trop tardif du wagnerisme à Paris.

Cette situation—qu'on le sache bien—n'a rien de désolant ni d'humiliant. J'ai à cœur de le constater d'abord et cet article, je l'avoue, n'a d'autre but que d'indiquer la place due à notre art, place des plus belles, qui sera conquise librement, noblement, sans aucun secours officiel ou intéressé ; comme il convient ; par la nécessité même des choses, par la force, la franchise, la clarté, la fierté de cet art, par tout ce qui le rend national, par la foi en lui que ne peuvent manquer d'avoir ceux qui, travaillant de leur cerveau, de leur âme, de leur être entier à sa gloire, en gardent un orgueil et une joie.

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Ceci nettement posé, pour connaître le terrain de combat sur lequel nous sommes, il n'est pas inutile de savoir notre orientation actuelle. J'ai, à cet égard, un renseignement précieux. Une enquête, dont j'ai, avec beaucoup de soin, conservé les pièces, a été ouverte, il y a quelques mois dans les colonnes du *Figaro*. "Où allons nous, en politique, en philosophie, etc.—avait-on demandé à l'élite de nos contemporains—et, en art, par exemple, une réaction de l'esprit français, *bien français*, ne se prépare-t-elle pas contre les peintures, les littératures, les musiques étrangères?" L'unanimité des réponses fut que le préraphaélisme, l'ibsenisme et le wagnerisme touchaient chez nous à leur déclin.

De ces trois religions, la plus importante à coup sûr, celle qui a réuni les plus nombreux, les plus enthousiastes adeptes est le wagnerisme. Le culte se justifie non seulement par la prodigieuse magnificence de l'œuvre extraordinaire qui en fait l'objet, mais aussi par les persécutions dont son fondateur, au début, a été victime et enfin par le dogme même, un peu "hermétique," comme on dit maintenant. (A toute religion, indépendamment de sa portée morale et sociale, ne faut-il pas le martyre et le mystère?) Si le préraphaélisme et l'ibsenisme ont modifié certains cerveaux de peintres et de littérateurs, en en laissant d'autres intacts, le wagnerisme, lui, s'est emparé victorieusement, despotiquement, de l'universalité des âmes. Aucun de nos musiciens, aucun, entendez-vous, n'a échappé à son influence, excellente pour ceux qui ont su rester des créateurs, néfaste pour ceux qui sont devenus des copistes, et nos foules, après tant de vaines querelles, ont été conquises, d'un coup, dans l'affolement des splendeurs révélées ou devinées. Que l'art wagnerien soit d'essence éternelle, que Richard Wagner ait

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sa place marquée dans l'avenir à côté de Bach, de Mozart, de Beethoven, ses glorieux ancêtres, nul n'en doute et moi moins que quiconque, mais j'estime que la religion wagnerienne, qui est une chose bien différente, "bat son plein" aujourd'hui, et je pense, à mon tour, que son déclin est proche. On peut donc prévoir quelles seraient pour le Drame lyrique français les conséquences de ce déclin qui permettrait à nos compositeurs de secouer un joug funeste, de dégager leur personnalité, de reprendre leur entière liberté, de retrouver un théâtre et un public.

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C'est à l'Opéra surtout que le wagnerisme "bat son plein." Comment, en effet, ne pas être frappé de la persistance du vent d'est qui gonfle les voiles de la barque chantante où flottent assez ironiquement nos trois gaies couleurs, barque si vite désemparée dès que ce vent tourne un peu? Là, Wagner, le fou, le misérable, le paria d'autrefois, est dieu maintenant, et il y a dans ce fait de quoi remplir d'aise les personnes éprises de justice et rendre inébranlable l'opinion des gens qui croient encore à quelque chose de bon en ce monde. La fervente admiration d'à présent rachète le mépris brutal de jadis et la religion wagnerienne agenouille enfin devant un poète, en une commune adoration, le pompier de service à côté du spectateur. Quelle que soit la condition sociale de ceux qui forment le "peuple" de ce théâtre, leur fanatisme est de pareille violence, de pareille générosité d'ailleurs, et il a pour cause, c'est évident, le besoin identique que ressentent constamment les hommes d'honorer le génie après l'avoir bafoué. Ce fanatisme, comme tous les fanatismes du reste, est extraordinairement, étonnamment, magnifiquement aveugle. Par devoir professionnel, par suprême joie d'art, j'assiste

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aux premières représentations, à l'Opéra, des drames de Wagner, dont je connais depuis des années et des années les partitions, les ayant lues, étudiées, entendues maintes fois à l'étranger. Je crois pouvoir dire que certains de ces drames exigent, pour être compris, une attention non pas d'un soir mais de plusieurs semaines. Il semble que leur complexité, leur longueur, leur forme littéraire et musicale, et même leur écrasante beauté, s'opposent à une immédiate communion. Le public de notre Académie Nationale n'a besoin, lui, ni de lectures, ni d'études, ni d'auditions préalables. En pleine ivresse, il pénètre dans la forêt sonore et, plus les branches touffues de ses arbres gigantesques s'entre-croisent étroitement, plus ses chemins sont difficiles à parcourir, plus hasardeuse, fatigante, inquiétante est l'exploration à laquelle il n'a pas pris soin de se préparer, plus son plaisir est vif. Pendant ces représentations, l'extase se montre sur tous les visages, l'extase tranquille, complète et définitive, obtenue naturellement, simplement, sans que cela coûte aucun peine à l'esprit, et, à l'entr'acte, dans les couloirs, dans les loges, l'extase devient du délire, chacun commentant les symboles, les thèmes et le reste en un cri de furieux et mystique enthousiasme.

Ceci admis, on s'aperçoit qu'il faudrait, pour imposer un nouvel ouvrage français à l'Opéra, dépenser autant d'efforts qu'il en fût fait, il y a quelques années, pour y imposer les ouvrages allemands. Qui donc oserait demander cela ? Jusqu'à présent, les drames de Wagner ont assuré sans péril à ceux qui les exploitaient un gain qui n'eut été réalisé, avec d'autres drames, qu'à l'aide de beaucoup de cranerie combative, d'une sérieuse persévérance dans l'entêtement, d'une sereine confiance dans le succès final, d'une grande prévoyance dans l'avenir, d'une façon d'amour propre. Car—

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on est obligé de le reconnaître et de le déplorer—pas une seule des œuvres que l'Académie Nationale de musique a jouées sans qu'elles aient passé d'abord par une autre scène n'a été, depuis que le monument est bâti, maintenue au répertoire. L'honneur d'avoir monté *Faust*, de Gounod, reste au théâtre lyrique; l'honneur d'avoir monté *Sigurd*, de Reyher, reste au théâtre de la Monnaie de Bruxelles, et l'honneur d'avoir monté *Samson et Dalila*, de Saint Saëns, reste au théâtre de Weimar. (Je cite là les trois grandes partitions françaises que l'on peut entendre à peu près régulièrement à l'Opéra, quand celles de Wagner ou les autres partitions étrangères, innombrables, le permettent.) Mais faire réussir sur les planches de notre première maison d'Etat les *Troyens*, de Berlioz, dont on parle toujours et que l'on ne représente jamais; *Hulda*, de César Franck, que l'on s'obstine à ignorer, et, pour quitter les sommets de l'art, *Gwendoline*, de Chabrier; *Namouna*, de Lalo; *Thamara*, de Bourgault-Ducoudray, par exemple, ah! cela, vraiment, offre trop de difficultés et mieux vaut sans doute y renoncer.

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Ou patienter peut-être.

Tristan et Iseult, *l'Or du Rhin*, *Siegfried*, le *Crépuscule des Dieux*, *Parsifal* attendent leur tour. Si, au lieu de fermer d'abord la route aux drames wagnériens, on les avait accueillis, un à un, dès leur entrée dans le monde intellectuel, ils ne barreraient plus le chemin à leur tour aux drames qui les suivent et le mouvement naturel de l'art n'eut point été arrêté chez nous. Mais le mal est fait, et il n'y a qu'à essayer de le réparer. Dans sept ou huit ans, les cinq ouvrages en retard auront été joués. Après quoi, à moins de recourir à *Rienzi* et aux *Fées*, il faudra absolument

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compter avec la musique française, car je ne suppose pas que, dans un besoin pressant d'exotisme, on se tourne alors vers M. Mascagni ou que l'on mette en demeure M. l'abbé Pérozi de composer pour le théâtre. Ah! quel triomphe et quelle revanche! Oui, oui, je le sais bien et je le crie à pleins poumons: Wagner fut un homme unique et son œuvre, sur la plus haute colline des pays du rêve, s'érige, indestructible, gigantesque et stupéfiante cathédrale où résonnent, où résonneront éternellement les mystérieuses et divines orgues. Mais enfin, si grand que fût ce colosse, il n'a pas eu le privilège d'arrêter l'aiguille du temps et le siècle qui vient, en dépit de tout, ne sera point son siècle; si universelle que fût sa pensée écrite, par l'humanité profonde des sentiments qu'elle traduit, elle n'en demeure pas moins d'expression purement, fermement, résolument, fièrement allemande. (Rappelez-vous l'une des dernières phrases du discours d'Hans Sachs, dans les *Maîtres Chanteurs*.) Et c'est en l'amour du sol natal que le prodigieux poète a trouvé son génie.

Par bonheur,—car on se fatigue des plus sublimes choses, toujours pareilles,—nos qualités de race sont diamétralement opposées à celles qui ont fait la force de l'œuvre victorieux et elles feront, à leur tour, la force de l'œuvre naissant. Je n'ai pas à les définir; on les connaît; elles se manifestent à chaque instant en nos livres, en nos sculptures, en nos tableaux, en nos opéras comme en nos symphonies. La mesure, la clarté, le goût affiné n'excluent pas la puissance, l'émotion, l'audace et l'on peut s'exprimer nettement, brièvement, franchement, sans platitude et sans infériorité. L'heure est proche où notre foule réclamera à grands cris des mélodies nouvelles et, je suis bien tranquille, c'est chez nous qu'elle les trouvera, car ces mélodies—déjà désirées,

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qu'on s'en rende compte ou non—seront enfin conformes aux aspirations de nos cœurs et de nos esprits.

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Et voici ce que je ne cesse de dire à mes cadets, les musiciens de France qu'attriste le trop long hiver de notre art immortel et qui attendent le printemps comme une heureuse délivrance: "Ah! jeunes gens, qui êtes encore sur les bancs de l'école, et vous, garçons, qui travaillez seuls et libres, laissez-moi vous réconforter et vous mettre le courage à l'âme en vous assurant que l'avenir vous appartient et que vous serez demain l'honneur de votre pays. Vous avez choisi la plus difficile, la plus pénible des carrières, mais aussi la plus glorieuse, puisque vous devrez la parcourir en tenant haut et ferme un drapeau qu'il faut défendre. 'Devant Wagner, nous n'avons qu'à tomber avec grâce' a écrit, non sans quelque amertume, un de nos maîtres illustres qui, du reste, ne saurait descendre de la tour d'ivoire où il s'est noblement réfugié. Vous montrerez l'ironie de cette boutade en gagnant les batailles auxquelles vous prendrez part et en vous élevant toujours vers la vérité et la beauté. Et les hommes de la génération précédant la vôtre pourraient s'enorgueillir, n'eussent ils servi qu'à vous préparer le terrain de lutte et de triomphe sur lequel va se lever enfin le magnifique et éblouissant soleil du Renouveau . . ."

Alfred Bruneau.

A NOTE ON THE WRITING OF MUSICAL HISTORY

NOTHING is more bewildering to the student of old music than the persistency with which his recognised authorities lead him astray. He follows out some line of research on the strength of statements made by the eminent A., and confirmed by the equally eminent B., C., and D., only to find, after much floundering, that these supposed facts are myths, and that he must "try back" afresh. A. made the misleading statement, B. repeated it; C. quoted B.; and D. harked back to A. as his authority; so that the "consensus of authorities" turns out to be nothing more than A.'s original rash statement. As an instance of this, I have watched one of these "snowball" facts gather weight until it has rolled into no less a publication than the *Dictionary of National Biography*. I am sure that Messrs. Henry Davey, and G. E. P. Arkwright—earnest musicians both—will be the first to thank me for pointing out that they have gone astray on a rather important point.

The ball was first set a-rolling in *The Overture* for May 1893, by an article entitled "Curious Discoveries," from which I extract the following:—

"Another discovery of Mr. Davey's is a Passion according to St. John, composed by Tye, *i.e.* a harmonised setting of the fourteen utterances of the crowd. This must be earlier than even Vittoria's

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Passions, which were composed in 1585, when Tye was long dead; there is more life and movement in them than in the plain chords of Vittoria. The soprano part may be found in Addl. MSS. 30,480, and there is a complete score in an eighteenth-century MS. Addl. 31,226. The setting is for three voices, and is written in the soprano, alto, and tenor clefs. As specimens of the style, we give the first and simplest of the sentences, and also the most animated. The contrast with the plain chant of the ordinary passages is most beautiful."

[Here follow the illustrations, with the Latin wrongly spelt, by the way.]

"There is nothing to indicate the date of Tye's work except that it was probably composed before the accession of Elizabeth, in 1558, and possibly in Henry Eighth's time."

In the preface to his excellent edition of Tye's Mass "Euge Bone," published in 1893, Mr. Arkwright gives a list of Tye's compositions, in which this "Passion for three voices" appears. We next meet our friend, in 1896, in the pages of Mr. Davey's *History of English Music*, where the style of the composition is criticised at some length; Mr. Davey adding that it is "the oldest Passion which he has seen," save one. I now see that the article on Tye (signed "H. D.") in the latest number of the *Dictionary of National Biography* gives this said "Passion according to St. John" amongst Tye's compositions.

Here, one would think, was authority enough on the subject of an important work by a famous composer. But what are the facts? Simply that Tye did not write this "Passion" at all. The work which Mr. Davey "discovered," which *The Overture* described, which Mr. Arkwright refers to, which Mr. Davey further criticises in his book, and which is finally mentioned by "H. D." in the "Tye" article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*—is simply Byrd's "Passion," published in the first volume of his *Gradualia*, in 1607.

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The MSS. which attribute it to Tye are eighteenth-century ones, so there is no room for doubt as to the author. I offer no opinion on Mr. Davey's reasons for his original statement; but with a well-known work like Byrd's *Gradualia* easily accessible, it seems odd that, when he "discovered" these eighteenth-century MSS., he should not have noticed that the work there attributed to Tye was identical with the well-authenticated composition of Byrd, published about a hundred years previously.

R. Terry.

*Facing this Page is a Facsimile of part of a Manuscript by
BEETHOVEN. The Original is in the British Museum.*

Allegro *Diagio* *Jonatiss per il Mandolino* *Concerto de L. v. Beethoven.*

The musical score is written on ten staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The tempo markings "Allegro" and "Diagio" are written above the first staff. The title "Jonatiss per il Mandolino" and "Concerto de L. v. Beethoven." are written above the second staff. The music is written in a cursive, handwritten style. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The manuscript is on aged, slightly yellowed paper.

D. C. [Signature]

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PEROSI

So long as a movement is conducted in another country than this England of ours, it matters little to anyone whether it ends in a real gigantic boom or a most melancholy fizzle. What does it matter whether the whole Continent is entranced with the vulgarity and naïve brutality of a Mascagni's "*Cavalleria Rusticana*," if the thing does not penetrate into England; what care we for the popularity of a thousand Leoncavallo's, if we can trust the military defences of Dover and the South coast to prevent them invading our peace? It is only when we learn that we have vainly trusted in the War Office, that the enemy is already in our midst working havoc amongst our treasured convictions, and making day and night hideous with his music, it is only then that the stolid Englishman rises in his wrath and endeavours—generally quite unsuccessfully—to drive the invader out. He is generally too late; that is why he is generally unsuccessful. So shall it not be in this case—the case of Lorenzo Perosi, priest and composer.

We believe that it would be nothing less than the greatest of possible misfortunes if this gentleman's music were to "catch on" in London; we believe that his success here would be a much greater misfortune than was the success of Mascagni and Leoncavallo. In their case something positive was brought to music, if it was nothing more

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than positive vulgarity and realistic brutality. Their music was bad, as bad perhaps as music could well be and still retain the name of music ; but their operas had at least the merit of being founded on clear, definite and dramatic stories. It may even be that they helped in the dispelling of that notion which has been the ruin of nearly every English opera composer up to the present time—the notion, namely, that the story of an opera must be merely a peg to hang a series of musical numbers upon. Composer after composer has set books compact solely of rubbish, under the erroneous impression that—at this time of day, mark you, after Wagner!—that the music would cover every shortcoming in the drama, would compensate for the total lack of a drama to interest the onlookers. Mascagni and Leoncavallo seemed to know better—only seemed, alas ! as their later achievements show too, too clearly. But in Perosi we find no such compensation for the badness, the intolerable badness, of the music. It is true that whereas theirs was music for the theatre, his is music for the church, or the concert-room when it is used as a church—which of course it always is when an oratorio is sung. But, seeing that at present oratorio is a dead form of art, one either demands that a new spirit shall be infused into it to shape it afresh, or that it shall be a fine exercise written in the dead form. The latter is not a particularly noble ideal ; still, it is an ideal ; and Perosi has not sought to attain it. And as for recasting and revivifying the oratorio, that, we think, is an impossible task, as impossible a task as that of reviving the Greek drama in these modern days ; and, anyhow, Perosi has not attempted to do that either. His music we consider, then, to be wholly bad ; its popularity, we must confess, is to us an inscrutable mystery. There is in it nothing fine or

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elevated ; nothing, on the other hand, of the positive blatant vulgarity of Mascagni and Leoncavallo. Why, even in Italy, the home of bad music, it should have succeeded in turning the heads of the brainless is a conundrum we cannot pretend to solve, at anyrate until the oratorios have been performed during this month at Mr. Robert Newman's London Festival ; and we have but a small hope of being in a position to solve it then. Still, the attitude of the multitude towards it may reveal something. Meantime, whatever the public may think of it, our judgment, formed after a very careful study of the scores, is not likely to be altered. We think, as we have said, that it is bad music ; and we think also, seeing the enormous amount of booming of it which is going on in advance, that we should say so now, lest those whose more refined faculties tell them it is bad should fear to say so when everyone appears to be saying the contrary.

Our difficulty at the outset is that there is in Perosi's music so little to take hold of. Were a student to bring us such balderdash for our opinion, we should tell him not to trouble us until he had invented a genuine melody, a real theme, and not to expect us to waste time in poring over a mass of loosely strung passages, destitute of meaning, emotion, colour—destitute of anything approaching a definite outline. Perosi's music in general reminds us of nothing so much as of the first fumbling endeavours of the vicar's daughter to extemporise a voluntary on the organ of the parish church in the absence of the regular organist. There is never anything like a definite theme ; the working of the passages that do duty for themes is always puerile, like a music student's first fugue ; and the harmonies are inconsequential to a degree that simply staggers one. One thinks at first that there must be some reason for, some

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dramatic point hidden in, passages that simply outrage the ear. But no; at the moment when some extraordinary progression might not only be forgiven, but might perhaps be mistaken for a masterstroke, we never get anything of the sort; these progressions always occur at moments when nothing in the words demands them, when their sole effect is to dislocate the flow of the music—such flow as may be found in Perosi's music. Everlastingly one is reminded of the vicar's daughter, of the first sprawling efforts of an ungifted student to write a fugue. They are simply barbarous crudities. So much for his "strange harmonic progressions," of which we have heard too much from an ingeniously inspired press. And as for Perosi's scholarship, as manifested in his endeavours after fugal and complicated passage writing, let us say at once that it is of the most elementary sort. Nothing more babyish and fatuous than his fugues has ever come before our notice.

Let us begin with his "Transfiguration of Christ." Taken as sheer music, the introduction is beneath contempt; regarded as a preparation for the ensuing drama, we fail to discover in it a particle of meaning. The first theme (as one must call it) is lame and impotent, and it drifts off into a long drawn-out series of nothings. Key follows key in the most bewildering way. There is no beauty, no reason. Finally, and happily, a phrase that anyone might have written, that only a sense of what is needed in a phrase prevents most students writing, brings the piece to a sort of conclusion. There is no reason why it should ever end; this sort of thing could be worked over forty pages without taxing a schoolboy's brains. Then the story commences; and that there may be no mistake about it, it is given (in, after all, the conventional fashion) to a tenor. Perosi seems

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to have thought of a tenor of weak lungs. First we have three or four bars given to the voice, then three or four to the orchestra; this proceeds for page upon page, the only variation being that when the voice has an extra demand made upon it—say, when six bars are given it—the orchestra has passages from six to sixty bars long. We defy any reader to find a beautiful bar in either voice or orchestral part; and we assure him that of those odd harmonic progressions, irrational series of modulations leading to nowhere, he will find enough to astonish him. Then a chorus is introduced; thirteen bars of unison plain chant, or something like it. Once more the orchestra and the story-teller resume their quaint dialogue, until at last St. Peter is introduced. One looks out immediately for some faint attempt at characterisation. Even in church music one cannot have all the characters talking precisely alike: from Bach to Gounod every church composer has individualised, if only to a slight extent, the various people of his story. But Perosi apparently thinks differently; and in Perosi's scores it is impossible to tell (save from the fact of one being a bass, another a tenor, another again a soprano, and so on) whether it is the narrator, or Jesus, or Mary Magdalene who is speaking. St. Peter is as impossibly dreary and, we regret to say, as short-breathed as the narrator; and no more beautiful phrases are given him—his part, like the narrator's part and the part of Jesus, is the baldest of bald recitative. Perosi seems to have chosen any string of notes that went more or less harmoniously—according to his notions of harmony—with the orchestral accompaniment. Soon we have a harmonised chant for the chorus; then more short-breathed phrases for orchestra and story-teller; and finally a voice from heaven sings a bit of melody that

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would disgrace the most undisguised pot-boiler ever turned out by a composer of fashionable drawing-room ballads. Compared with this, "The Better Land" is as "Tristan and Isolde" to the "Better Land." The fourth and fifth bars of the fourth stave of page 14 form one of the most amazing cadences ever written: we advise our readers to try it on the piano. After all, though we are no sticklers for musical grammar, one cannot say "They was." But we are still only at page 14, and our space is rapidly disappearing. We run hastily through the score to note any special passages we have marked, and we see that we have merely marked whole pages and groups of pages. So we throw "The Transfiguration of Christ" on one side as ineffable rubbish. But since the story is not one that readily invites musical treatment, in fairness to Perosi let us look at his setting of a story which does afford fine chances to a composer of any ability—the story of the "Raising of Lazarus."

It is rather calculated to arouse astonishment to find, on passing from the one oratorio to the other, that the music of both is very much the same—so much the same that were the binders by accident to take twenty pages from one and place them in another, those who do not understand the words might never detect the mistake. Even the junction, if a trifle unusual, could scarcely be worse than some of Perosi's commonest progressions. But it arouses more than astonishment continually to find the same phrases, the same sets of notes, in the two works. Again and again we find passages in the "Raising of Lazarus" that make us think we are still busy with the "Transfiguration"—both voice and orchestra are the same in the two cases. The reason is not far to seek. Perosi's music, as has been said, contains no definite themes: it is entirely wanderings hither and thither of voices

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and instruments ; and what we now learn is that, despite his apparently incessant modulations, the composer never gets very far away from home. His works are made up of half-a-dozen sequences of chords—not more ; and the irritating sense which his music promptly, inevitably begets, is due partly to this as well as to the bungling arrangement of these key sequences. To establish this need not take any reader long : let him take any half-dozen pages of any two oratorios and look out for “reminiscences.” They are rather hard to recognise at first, because of the utter commonplaceness of all the music ; but a quarter of an hour’s practice will enable anyone to find them. And when once the ear learns to hear them quickly, how unspeakably tedious do the oratorios become ! One bar is like another ; one page like another ; one oratorio like another. There is no real composition here.

But let us see what use Perosi has made of his undoubtedly fine opportunities in the “Raising of Lazarus.” Missing all the dreary telling of the story, the message brought by the servant, the unthinkable bad and inexpressive fugue intended to depict the illness of Lazarus, let us pass at once to the first possibly great scene—the scene culminating in the tremendous words, “I am the Resurrection and the Life.” One is immediately struck with the fact that though the part of Christ is supposed to be taken by a baritone, yet most of his music seems to be written for a tenor. Indeed it would try most tenors sadly. How a baritone can sing it without cracking his voice is to us something of a puzzle. However, leaving this point also, we find at the beginning of the scene a splendid effect carefully missed, not through lack of musicianship so much as through lack of the very elements, of the raw material, of musicianship.

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Jesus says : "Resurget frater tuus." Martha replies : "Scio quia resurget in resurrectione in novissimo die." Martha repeats the bit of melody given to Christ save only the last note, and then the thing tails off into paltry Italian opera melody of the weakest, most sickly sort, thereby missing a notable effect. But that is not all. The mere repetition of Christ's phrase an octave higher helps also to miss the effect. Had the passage been given to Christ in almost any other key than the key in which it appears, its effect when echoed by Martha would have been ten times, ten thousand times, intenser. But the worst miss of all is the setting of "I am the Resurrection." Here are words that may be said to have altered the face of the earth, that have certainly changed and moulded the lives of millions of the globe's inhabitants ; they are uttered in a stupendous situation—just before the raising of Lazarus ; and Perosi sets them to the driest of dry recitative in the baritone's top register. One phrase of this recitative, a bald and unconvincing phrase, is immediately seized by the horns and laboriously worked for many bars, for all the world as though it were a genuinely dignified and pregnant theme. There is absolutely nothing in it ; it is old as the hills ; it is not particularly beautiful ; it has no emotional meaning. As for Martha's speech in reply, it is set to a sheer operatic tune, culminating in a jig, and is more inclined to make one laugh than to move one to any other emotion. After wading through many dreary pages, we come at last to the highest dramatic moment of the oratorio. Here we find Christ given the same kind of music as has already been spouted by the narrator, by the servant, by everyone. From the heights of his top F he calls Lazarus. A bubbling is heard in the orchestra ; the trumpet plays a crude fanfare ; and while one is wondering whether the music

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would not serve very well for the hopping up of a demon in a pantomime, or for an imitation of the Rhine music in the "Rhinegold," the thing comes to a conclusion, and the narrator goes off merrily with a kind of hornpipe. But Perosi cannot sustain even the movement of a hornpipe. That too presently drops to pieces, and then we have the final chorus of the work. It consists of a chorale with variations. Suffice it to say, that while the form is so broken as to be simply exasperating, its treatment is merely puerile. The *naïveté* of the man is amazing. Perosi might perhaps explain his uncultivated harmonic sense and its results by saying that this, that, or the other is what he felt; and from that there might be no appeal. But when he deliberately goes out to write sheer music in a form which has exercised the fullest powers of some of the greatest masters of technique, he simply shows himself a beginner, and a beginner of small gifts. One immediately throws the "Raising of Lazarus" after the "Transfiguration of Christ."

We do not deny that Perosi may be perfectly sincere; but we flatly deny the sincerity of those who have boomed his music as extensively as it has been boomed of late. We should like to know how Mr. Robert Newman came to give up so many hours of his approaching London Festival to the performance of no less than three of these ugly, meaningless achievements; and we hope that whatever portion of the public may see fit to waste their time there, will trust their own judgment, and not be persuaded by the duffers of English criticism into accepting Perosi as a heaven-sent genius. He is not a genius; he is a young man of less than average ability; and we implore him, before he sets pen to paper again, to take a few lessons from a bold

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and competent teacher of harmony and counterpoint. From the Royal College, from the Royal Academy, even from the Guildhall, a dozen students could be drawn who would write better music than anything Perosi has yet published.

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THE last two volumes of Wagner's translated prose works¹ (vols. vi. and vii.), to which Mr. Ashton Ellis has given so unswerving a devotion, so unselfish a laboriousness during so many years of simple perseverance, make the most significant contrast conceivable; for the sixth volume brings us to within a fortnight of Wagner's death—the last paper is dated January 31, 1883; while in the seventh we are transported forty odd years into the backward of time to the Paris and Dresden writings that appeared between 1840 and 1850. The odd result is that in the earlier volume you find the master discussing "Parsifal"; in the later you find him engrossed in "Das Liebesverbot." In the eighties he had attained a calmness which was almost that of contemplation, and a tolerance that expressed the full breadth of his personality; in the forties he was pounding away for what he was worth at all his favourite aversions—bitter, witty, sometimes brutal, sometimes most determinedly blind, hot-blooded and perfectly indifferent to hostility or opposition. We propose to make some contrast out of Wagner's own writings between the man that he was in the height of his youthful heat and fires, and the man he became when with the cooling of those flames his magnificent genius had reached the culmination of its career, its ultimate development. But first a word upon the apparent strangeness of the order in which the volumes have appeared. Mr. Ashton Ellis's explanation is completely satisfactory on this head. When the London Society invited Mr. Ellis to undertake his formidable task, it was understood that one volume should issue every two years, and it was therefore considered advisable to begin at once with the prose that succeeded the Dresden period, the works "that mark the great climacteric of Richard Wagner's life," instead of delaying them for two years. Since 1892, however, the rate of publication has doubled; but there would have been no manner of sense in returning to the earlier works before the later ones had all come out: an entirely reasonable conclusion. It may (this is our own appendix), however, be considered equally reasonable, when a second edition of

¹ *Richard Wagner's Prose Works* (translated by W. Ashton Ellis), vols. vi. and vii. (London: Kegan Paul).

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the *Prose Works* appears, to shuffle the seventh volume back to its chronological place.

Come, then, first to the young man of thirty, wild with ambition, certainly not distinguished by modesty, but wise in self-knowledge and equally wise in his apprehension of the value of work then filling the public mind and drawing to itself the laurels of public applause. He determines to write on Rossini's "Stabat Mater," and he will spare neither man nor work, neither publisher nor the publisher's morals. How mercilessly, how bitterly he accomplished his resolve there is this essay (vol. vii. pp. 143-149) to prove: "There circulated," says he, "dismal rumours about the extraordinary mood the maestro was in; at one moment we heard that his hypogastrium was much incommoded, at another his beloved father had died";—a sorry subject, you would say, for a jest:—"one said that he meant to turn fishmonger, another that he refused to hear his operas any more. But the truth seems to have been that he felt penitent and meant to write church-music. . . . The earliest stimulus to carry out his expiation seems to have come to him in Spain: in Spain, where Don Juan found the amplest, choicest opportunities of sin, Rossini is said to have found the spur to penance." There you have the characteristic Wagner of that time. The thing is really too sincere, the ground feeling is too cruel and mordant to make the paper very amusing; but it has that extreme power which you find in only the greatest satirists, and which succeeds in for ever associating this subject—as on other occasions he succeeded in associating other subjects—Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer, for examples—with some taint that was ridiculous, ignoble, even sordid. In a masterly but intensely savage paragraph he describes how the "Stabat" came to be composed—how Herr Aguado and Rossini were driving together, Aguado nibbling chocolate, Rossini munching pastry, when compunction for many robberies suddenly came to Aguado—he was a Paris banker!—and he drew the chocolate from his mouth while "Rossini gave his teeth a rest, and confessed that all through life he had devoted too much time to pastry." The upshot was that Aguado gave the Prior of a certain monastery a few bank-notes; and Rossini, not to be behindhand, "produced a solid quire of music-paper, and what he wrote on it post-haste was nothing less than a whole 'Stabat Mater' with grand orchestra," which he presented to the Prior.

Here you have Wagner, as we have said, at thirty or so, in his intensest mood of mockery and intolerance, with one eager thought and desire burning at his spirit—the thought and the desire of art, his mind luminous, alight with the right sort of feeling for that art, his opinions and his judgments an essential part and parcel of his perfectly sincere self. In a paper on German Music (p. 96) there is a passage on Mozart so brilliantly and so profoundly true that it comes like a lamp in the exploration of Wagner's sincerity and depth of purpose; and every now

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and then, as you turn over page by page, another such paragraph will leap to the eyes and confront you with double convincingness. One can think it possible—though it is difficult to be sure upon such a matter—that had one read these essays at the time of their publication, one might have said: "If this man has within him a growing, a developing creative power, I can fancy him reaching almost any height in the art which he has chosen to be his." For here again, in living words, in restless phrases, in the heart fluttering as it were towards futurity, as a creeping plant shows its ear by signs of upward motion, you have the signs of creativeness quivering with vitality and expectation. You feel, in these indices, the spirit moving over the great dark waters of his mind. Here, for one example, dated 1848, is the complete sketch of a dramatic version of the Nibelungen-Myth, a version which is, in nearly every detail, that which became "*Der Ring des Nibelungen*," after so much labour and thought, and inspiration, and passing from strength to strength. And yet, if you read just from this point of view, deliberately setting aside that which we know to have been the word of destiny, you feel too the incompleteness, the feverish desire to be in flight, to be in flight for a goal not even definitely idealised, but somewhere there, in the East where the sun will rise. . . . And now turn to the sixth volume, and in one winging pass over the interspace of thirty years.

Let us now look on the picture which the earlier volume paints of the man. He is fearless as ever, prejudiced as ever—"each single number of '*Euryanthe*,'" says he, "is worth more than all the *Opera Seria* of Italy, France, Judæa"—but the note of restlessness, of outstretching, of expectation touched by a sort of unconfessed fear that is now clean silenced. There is a radiant joy, a grand confidence, and a kingly feeling of self-justification in its place. He can speak now, not with passionate anxiety, of that which he desires to do, but with magnificent calmness of that which he has done. He can decry and decline the music of Brahms, but it is not now necessary, as in those Rossini days, to make any brutal reference, say, to Brahms's liver. On the other hand, he can draw the wittiest caricature of Brahms's position in music without a tinge of anything but brilliant good humour; and he can now discern Rossini with grave philosophy. Everywhere that justification of himself to which we have referred has drawn the strings out of his life, and he stands proved and complacent. Again there is page following page of the keenest and the broadest, yet the most rightly intolerant musical criticism imaginable, as anybody may find for himself who reads, for example, from the middle of page 142 to the end of page 145, to take one single concrete example. Even Mendelssohn now has justice done to him. "If he did not compose his choruses to '*Antigone*,'" says Wagner, "as finely as his Hebrides overture—which I hold for one of the most beautiful musical works that we possess—the reason was that it was the very thing he could not."

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So we see him in the closing days of his life largely and serenely peaceful in contrast with the days of struggle for utterance, for articulate words, for his personal fulfilment in music. One is reminded, in setting the two books side by side, of the closing scenes of Tamino in his beloved "Zauberflöte," as he passes through the trials of silence, of separation, of fire, and of water, before he enters upon the shining and silver temple of his complete art. Never was there so orbicular, so finished a career, as this of Richard Wagner. Ripeness is all; and he attained all. As you turn in Mr. Ellis's translation to this last sketch for a pamphlet dated, as we have said, a few days before the end, it is impossible to feel any regret for the mortal things of Wagner's life. He might have written another music drama; but he had written enough. He had reached the summit of the mountain, and he just lay down and slept.

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast. . . .

Nothing but well and fair,

MR. ISIDORE DE LARA is certainly one of the most interesting phenomena in current musical history, on account not less of his own abilities than of the attitude assumed towards him by his countrymen. In the early days of his career, he won, in the drawing-rooms of the great, a peculiar position as a writer and singer of love-songs of a very exotic kind. This position he suddenly abandoned, and for at least eight years he has devoted himself, with almost incredible energy, to the composition of operas to which no one could deny seriousness of intention. Now, when a young man surrenders the practice of one form of art which is at once profitable and popular, and sets his hand to another which is notoriously unprofitable and arduous, he has a right to be considered with respectful attention, and it is only an indecent injustice that will continue to reproach him with the crudities of his earlier performances. Mr. de Lara has certainly been subjected to injustice of this kind, and it is impossible not to compare his case with that of another English composer who waited till he had accumulated a fortune, and passed middle life, before he went out to look for greatness. He found no place of repentance, though he sought it, one supposes, with tears; but though his work was a failure, no one cared to draw the obvious moral that repentance may be delayed too long. It is necessary, however, to explain that in Mr. de Lara's case there is no question of repentance or conversion. He was as sincere in his ballads as he is now in his operas; the point being that to the gifts with which he started on his career has now been added that ripeness of experience which alone enables a composer to direct the complex forces of the modern operatic stage to certain and inevitable ends. Mr. de

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Lara, it is proved by the score of his latest opera, "Messaline," has merely gone forward steadily in all respects save one—that of artistic integrity, and here advance was impossible.

It becomes interesting, therefore, to wonder how long a time will still elapse before the good public is told by its most typical leaders to alter its attitude towards Mr. de Lara. It is not a pleasant proceeding to confess that one has been the victim of prejudice and wilful ignorance, but we suggest to those whom it may concern, that their act of confession will not become any easier for postponement, and that they will do well to seize the first opportunity of making acquaintance with "Messaline." For "Messaline," to put the truth shortly, is an opera which cannot be ignored. Had it been presented anonymously at Covent Garden, it would have been acclaimed at once as a great work, and the plenitude of its inspiration and the brilliance of its execution would have been recognised as unmistakable evidences of genius in its composer. Let them be so recognised now, for (abandoning this sorry matter of the dull injustice of the general English attitude) it is time to speak more definitely, with whatever conciseness, of the most salient features of the work which was brought to birth at Monte Carlo on 21st March. Happier than most of his contemporaries, Mr. de Lara has found a capital libretto. Messalina, as figured by MM. Armand Silvestre and Morand, is a very credible and imposing creature, and the story of her relations with Harès the street-singer, who is speedily thrown over for his brother Hélión the gladiator, is put together with uncommon skill. There are a few dull moments in the second act, certainly, but on the whole the drama moves swiftly, through some very stirring incidents, to a singularly powerful and effective catastrophe. The three chief characters, as suggested by the librettists and realised by the composer, are cunningly and subtly contrasted; the weak but poetic sweetness of Harès, and the simple barbaric strength of Hélión, standing in picturesque relief against the background of Messalina's gorgeous viciousness. It was a fortunate inspiration which prompted the presentation of the empress as seeking always, even in her most vulgar sensualism, to find the way to the true love. To be loved and to love unselfishly is her pitiable need, and in the final tragedy we see her clutching uselessly at the happiness which her own reckless vice has destroyed. This last act is conceived with very great breadth and vigour, and it would be hard to match the passion of its love-music or the poignancy of its pathos. And the music is all so honest. It is not, of course, all on the same high level as—to take three noteworthy examples—Hélión's song in the second act, Messalina's scene of passionate temptation in the last act, or the beautiful air, "O nuit d'amour," given to Harès; but all of it is absolutely and obviously sincere. The passion is always virile and clear, the melody clear-cut and characteristic, and the orchestration transparent but rich: "Messaline," in fine, is a

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work compact of dramatic power and musical beauty ; and—wonder of wonders—it was written by an Englishman. In the presence of so brilliant and moving an opera, it is hard to foresee the limits of Mr. de Lara's future achievements.

The performance at Monte Carlo was of rare excellence. Madame Hégion acted with immense force, and looked magnificently wicked ; Tamagno's wonderful voice found apt and ample employment, and, dramatically, the part of the gladiator gives him the finest chance he has had since Verdi wrote "Otello" for him ; while Max Bouvet's presentation of the gently passionate Harès was a masterpiece of stagecraft. The orchestra, under the admirable Jéhin, was as good as could be wished, and the opera was mounted luxuriously. The enthusiasm of the audience, let it be said finally, was fully commensurate with the merits of the work.

A PERFORMANCE of "Eugène Onegin," Tchaikowski's little-known opera, at Vienna the other day, was received with immense favour, and indeed it invariably is in this particular town. The opera has no admirers in England—the England, that is, which is emphatically for the English—for the very simple reason that the work is nearly a stranger here. That some time, possibly before the forty years' lease of the Syndicate is up, it may be produced at Covent Garden, must be the subject of a pious hope rather than of a definite expectation. A correspondents who was present at the Viennese performance, returns with the greatest enthusiasm for the work, which, operatic or not, has, he says, not a dull moment in it. It was conducted by Herr Mahler, who stands very high indeed in the favour of the Viennese public. Indeed his popularity is growing apace, and there are openly expressed opinions in many quarters that, as a conductor of opera, Mahler is preferable even to Richter.

AND *à propos* of Richter, that gentleman ought to feel very contented with himself, if contentment necessarily follows upon the acquisition of all that one has asked for. An absolutely independent and free hand at the Vienna Opera-house, a substantial increase of salary, permission to travel at his own sweet will,—here are terms that any artist might envy. (Fancy what Mozart could have done with quarter the chance.) So that it is now to be taken for granted that, in addition to his London and provincial concerts, Richter will fulfil the Manchester engagement, to which he verbally pledged himself some time ago. This gives us once more the chance of hearing a conductor who, upon his own particular lay, which of course has its limits, has no rival. It is unfortunate that the limits are so often allowed to pass by unrecognised. The public must have its idol, and there's an end on't.

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MR. ROBERT NEWMAN'S London Musical Festival is a perfect orgy of music, built upon so innumerable a selection that the very lavishness with which it has been constructed is like to be its greatest defect. The human brain is, after all, capable of enduring only a certain bulk of music at a time. Like a cup, it can contain only a definite measure of wine, and will overflow if you pour too freely. Mr. Newman would certainly have been wiser to have restrained his enthusiasm. Seven symphonies and seven concertos head his formidable list of works, which also include the three new oratorios by Perosi, of which we have heard too much. Surely, as the clever essayist has said, "violence is apt to confess its own limits;" and surely here, if anywhere, is the violence of a rather wanton accumulation of mere bulk. Even the Leeds Orgy grows tame before this latest excursion into the Kingdom of the Musical Festival.

SOME time ago a writer in the *Daily Chronicle* called the organ an instrument belonging rightfully to the old world, one which has arrived at its maturity long after the passing of the period which needed it as a medium of expression; and he explained that its growth had been slow because of the backward state of mechanical science in the days of our forefathers. It is, said this writer, an instrument coeval with the clavichord and spinet; now, when electric and pneumatic devices have made it an instrument fit to play upon, no music is written for it. Its smooth, massive tones will carry nothing of the rapid, tense, restless moods of our too-hasty modern life. Hence organ-players must choose between the fine old music or the bad new. On the one hand there are Bach, Sweelinck, Buxtehude and one or two more; on the other, the music of the dull Academics, or arrangements from comic and other operas and oratorios, and barnyard pieces. This deliverance excited the wrath of one Dr. Vincent. He wrote a paper and read it to a meeting of some insignificant body of musical practitioners. The article, said this Dr. Vincent, made his blood boil. It must indeed have been a terrible article to make Dr. Vincent's blood boil. Is not Dr. Vincent the gentleman who not merely writes music—anyone can write music—but actually sells it at a little establishment in Oxford Street? Still, publisher though he may be, as well as composer, Dr. Vincent's blood boiled. The question is, Why did Dr. Vincent's blood boil?

BECAUSE, said Dr. Vincent, every statement in the article was absolutely untrue. The fact of a particular issue of the *Daily Chronicle* containing a falsehood more or less seems hardly an excuse for the conduct of Dr. Vincent's blood. Besides, the statements in the article

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happened not to be falsehoods. It is a fact that no good music is written nowadays for the organ: that is a question on which we are quite unable to take Dr. Vincent's or any other interested gentleman's opinion. Dr. Vincent perhaps considers his own music good. For our part, we consider it poor. Then it is a fact that the organs built nowadays are steadily degenerating: fewer and fewer genuine stops are being put in, and more and more barnyard stops and "ear-ticklers." For those who decline to play cuckoo pieces, thunderstorm pieces, Old English merry-making pieces, bell pieces, and the rest of the common rubbish to be heard in nearly every English church to-day, there is nothing new save the dreary wastes of counterpoint called Organ Sonatas by Rheinberger. With this absence of music in which it is possible for a really live and thinking, feeling man to take an interest, it is a wonder we have so many good organists. The question of organs and organ-building is one to which we propose shortly to devote a considerable amount of attention in the *Chord*.

A CORRESPONDENT who has lately visited Hamburg, sends us an amusing account of a performance of Handel's "Saul" in a suburb of that Jew-ridden city. We omit all his humour and wit, however, feeling that course to be the kindest to him. The main thing, after all, is that Dr. Chrysander should be able to get Handel sung at all. What can you expect of a country which calls Handel Haendel? Dr. Chrysander seems to expect a great deal of it. For half a century he has steadily laboured, and not in vain; for to-day the average German musician knows of the existence of "Haendel's" works, and is less inclined than of yore to martyr those who profess to like them. Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, Haydn—all the great men—have testified to Handel's prodigious power; and if further testimony were wanted, we imagine that the Rev. A. B. C. Smith of the Little Bethel, Hoxton, would be willing to come forward and say what Handel's music has done for his soul; but, in spite of all this evidence, the Germans persist in underrating Handel as compared, for instance, with so ignominious a creature as Graun. Still, it was utter indifference, not depreciation, that Dr. Chrysander had to fight against; and to-day Germany, as the many Handel performances show, is at anyrate not indifferent. Germany thus owes much to Chrysander; but perhaps England owes more. We were formerly content with the performing editions of Handel's oratorios, editions prepared by such anti-musical persons as the late Macfarren and Costa. Now that we are beginning to want to see his music as he left it, and before the despoiling hand of the charlatan and the mathematician had ruined it, we must go to Chrysander's splendid editions; and we may be thankful that we have them to go to.

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